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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [PINR](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT FAILS TO ELECT PRESIDENT:
LIKELY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN 2010

Classified by: Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On December 7, the Moldovan parliament failed to elect Marian Lupu as president, since the Communists boycotted the vote, and Lupu fell eight ballots short. This moves Moldova into the next phase of the democratic process required to elect a president. Under Moldovan legislation, parliament must be disbanded so that new parliamentary elections can be held, but no earlier than June 2010. As no one wants an electoral campaign over the summer, most observers expect new elections no earlier than fall 2010. Alliance leaders also have been discussing other scenarios to elect the president such as by introducing a new constitution, or by using a referendum to introduce direct popular presidential elections. Despite the ongoing political drama, nothing has substantively changed for the Alliance government, which is functioning and continues to hold its parliamentary majority. End Summary.

Parliament Fails to Elect President

¶2. (SBU) At a special session of the Moldovan parliament convened for the second round of presidential voting on December 7, the Alliance for European Integration candidate Marian Lupu, who was the single candidate registered, failed to garner the 61 votes needed to be elected as President. As in the first round of voting November 10, the Party of Communists (PCRM) announced that they would boycott the voting and the 48 PCRM deputies filed out of the hall. The remaining 53 Alliance deputies proceeded with the balloting, but without the PCRM, the vote fell short.

No Morning-After Pill for Next Day Regrets

¶3. (C) PCRM MP Vladimir Turcan had talked both privately to us and publicly to the press about his desire to vote for Lupu. He also told us that his vote was conditional on enough PCRM deputies crossing the aisle with him. However, on the day of the balloting, he mutely left the hall together with the blockading Communists. On the day after the balloting he announced to the press that he regretted the PCRM decision not to vote, and that he would be leaving the Communist faction. Former Deputy Prime Minister Victor Stepaniuc, who was expected to join Turcan in voting for Lupu, also publicly announced his regrets about the PCRM decision not to vote.

¶4. (SBU) PCRM faction leader Vladimir Voronin was pleased about his party's boycott of the voting. He was shown grinning at a PCRM press conference and making his standard accusation that Ghimpu that "had three brain surgeries."

New Elections for Fall 2010?

¶5. (SBU) According to Moldovan legislation, if the parliament fails to elect a president in two rounds of voting, then the parliament should be dissolved, and new parliamentary elections held. As parliament cannot be dissolved twice in one year, and the parliament that was elected on April 5 was dissolved last on June 15, 2009, this means that the current parliament will remain in power at least until June 15, 2010. As it is widely believed that the Moldovans will not want to carry out an electoral campaign over the summer period, most observers expect that the parliamentary elections are most likely to be scheduled for fall ¶2010.

Alliance to Explore Other Options

¶6. (C) Alliance leaders also have told us that they will examine possibilities for changing Moldova's current, cumbersome mechanism (61 votes in the 101-seat Parliament) of electing the

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president. The problem, however, is that this mechanism is enshrined in the country's constitution. And as constitutional amendments require a two-thirds majority of 67 votes (which is even harder to reach than the presidential majority of 61 votes), some Alliance leaders are considering introducing a new constitution, although Lupu is opposed. On December 1, Acting President Ghimpu signed a decree establishing a Commission for Constitutional Reform to make suggestions about constitutional change and/or draft a new constitution.

¶7. (SBU) In a popular television talk show, "In Profunzime (In Depth)" on the evening of December 7, Ghimpu noted that if the current constitution which required the parliament to be dissolved was no longer in force in June 2010, then it was entirely possible to avoid dissolving the parliament. He also suggested that before June, a referendum could be organized to resolve the issue of procedures for electing a president.

¶8. (SBU) Marian Lupu, who has publically opposed the idea of introducing a new constitution, suggested instead that the country hold a referendum on constitutional changes that would allow the Moldovan public to elect the president through a system of direct popular voting.

Comment

¶9. (C) With the parliament's failure to elect a president on December 7, Moldova will now move into the next phase in the democratic process. The Alliance will actively discuss constitutional and legal measures to change the mechanism for presidential election, although it is not clear how cohesive their thinking is on this issue. Looking towards the possibility of new

parliamentary elections in 2010, the Alliance leaders may have to amend the election law in order to run as a bloc, as currently parties can only run separately.

¶10. (C) The PCRM is counting on tensions within the Alliance to grow -- in particular, they are hoping that the budding rivalry between PM Filat and Lupu will lead to a split. At the same time, the Alliance leaders are counting on a schism within the PCRM, as Turcan and others appear set to split from the party.

¶11. (C) Despite the ongoing political drama, it is important to remember that nothing has substantively changed for the GoM right now. The Alliance government is functioning and legitimate. It will remain in place as it has been since October, with a Prime Minister, a Cabinet of Ministers and an Alliance-controlled parliament. They seek support from Europe and the USG to be able to continue to demonstrate to the population the continued benefits of a government with a pro-Western orientation. To the extent that they can successfully maintain their cohesion and institutionalize reforms, the benefits of being the incumbent running the government will accrue before any future referendum or elections.

¶12. (C) While the months ahead may harden the confrontation between the Alliance and the Communists, this period will allow extra time for the political tendencies in the country to clarify. If the Alliance is successful in demonstrating its cohesion and leadership, the PCRM decline will likely accelerate. Though the Communists were able to maintain party discipline in the Parliament hall on December 7 to prevent its deputies from voting, they are unlikely to be able to prevent the deputies who favored voting from breaking ranks with the party and leaving the faction. These next months will be critical for Moldova in determining its political future and the strength of its desire for European integration.

CHAUDHRY